

The most important messages about truly living are found in the great book *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Morrie and Mitch drift apart and finally reunite during his (Morrie's) death. The lessons he teaches are not only for the author (and student) Mitch Albom, but lessons which the whole world should listen to. We hear from this story about how the only true way to live is to learn how to die. That message is inspirational and has a big impact, if you think about it. Just hearing the words first makes you say "What"? However, we need to dig deeper. Morrie says, "Everyone knows they're going to die, but nobody believes it. If we did, we would do things differently" (qtd. in Albom 81). Morrie then continues to talk about why this is true: "Oh, yes. You strip away all that stuff and you focus on the essentials. When you realize you are going to die, you see everything much differently" (qtd. in Albom, 83).

The message is profound, because it is so utterly true. Imagine you knew you were dying tomorrow, bright and early. Would you feel complete? I know I wouldn't. Right now I care about school and money. School is important, money isn't in the long run of things. Even more important than school, though, are people—friends and family. That's the essentials, that is what Morrie is talking about in his story, that is what Dillard is talking about in her story, and what Thoreau talks about in his. It all comes back to the essentials. And how do we get to that point in our lives when you can focus on this?

Answer—when we treat everyday as if it could be our final day. You cannot truly live until you learn how to die. Powerful. This all comes about through change in ourselves. And back to the grass roots of the matter: to change is to live. Because what does change do? Changing is growing, changing views, opinions, thoughts, and ideas. To change is to mature. For me, this change would mean to be more open with people and telling them how I feel more. Being happier, more upbeat. When you can look at yourself and say, “I need to fix this,” you’re growing up. And if you are changing your negatives and making them positives, you are living life better than ever before.

To live is not to seclude yourself from society, like Thoreau. To live is not to crawl in a hole, like a weasel. To live is to change. To prioritize, so if you died tomorrow, it’s with fulfillment within. All you really care about when you’re dying are the people around you. So why are we not more like that when we are alive? Maybe that’s the most important change we need to undergo--appreciation for the people we love around us.

The essentials in life are love, happiness, and people. And if you can accomplish all that, it doesn’t matter how rich, famous, and powerful you were. Why? Because you learned to prioritize, and change what is really important to you--and in the end, that’s what really living is truly about.